

THE SPIRITUAL ISSUES OF THE WAR

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MORE NEWS FROM THE DUTCH CHURCHES

"Religious Week"

The Dutch Church paper *Hervormd Nederland* of July 15th writes:

"From all parts of Holland there is news of the success of the 'Religious Week.' The churches, in large and small towns, in villages and hamlets, have been able to rejoice at the interest which has been shown by those outside the Church.

"This 'religious week' (Kerkweek) was organised for the purpose of establishing new contact between the Church and those who were outside it, even with those who were hostile to the Church. Almost everywhere it is reported that great numbers of unfamiliar faces have appeared at religious services.

"In Amsterdam there were fifteen special religious services. The week ended with a special service for youth. The Protestant Cathedral of Amsterdam has never been so full as it was for the evening youth service on the Saturday. . . . It is estimated that more than twenty thousand people visited the Reformed churches in Amsterdam during the week.

"It was the same at Haarlem, but it was remarked that the interest shown by the non-religious was not so great at the Sunday services as it was at those held on week-days.

"Our Church must become more and more a mission Church within the country, but it must be remembered that in the towns the language of the Church is no longer understood, and that in order to reach the great public the Church must preach the message of salvation in a language which is comprehensible to those who are strangers to Christianity."

Interest in Missions

It is interesting to know that the Dutch Churches are as much concerned with mission work to-day as ever they were. The paper *Standaard* discusses the report of Professor G. H. Bavinck, who observes that there are three kinds of students who are taking mission courses. First there are those who have contracted to go to missionary work later, then those who intend to do so, but do not wish to bind themselves before they have finished their studies; finally, those who want to know more about missions without having decided to go to the Indies.

Churchmen Among the Hostages

A report in the Swiss paper *Semour Vaudois* (July 10th) states that several pastors and lay readers of the churches are included in the four hundred and fifty hostages who were recently sent to a concentration camp in Holland. The internment of Dr. Grave-maier, Secretary of the Synod of the Dutch Reformed Church, and of Dr. de Zwaan, Professor of the New Testament at the University of Leyden, as well as the exiling to a village of Limbourg of Professor Scholten, President of the Consultative Council of the Dutch Reformed Church, is a particularly heavy blow against the life of the Church.

However, the Church continues to bear its witness. But is it renewed through suffering? That is the chief question, and a Dutch pastor replies to it in the following words:—

"We ought not to come to hasty conclusions. But there are reasons for our anxiety. We can testify to a new attitude of receptivity towards the Bible, a feeling of expecta-

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tion concerning the message of the Church, a new gratitude for the blessings which the Church conveys in the bosom of our national life. But at the same time a danger can be seen: the necessary resistance against what we ought not to believe or to do is more and more accompanied by a bitterness and hardness of heart, instead of being fed from the springs of purification and humility. This bitterness is sterile, it is an obstacle to victory. It has been and is a spiritual disease. More and more there is seen to be a danger for our preachers that their Christian needs may become absorbed in the national witness, and that we may not find the true relation which should be established between the Kingdom of God and the Kingdom of Holland. The question of discovering what the Church ought to learn in our time should occupy our attention much more than it does."

INCIDENTS FROM NORWAY

Churches Demolished

The Germans are razing to the ground any churches where they wish to build fortifications, according to *Aftontidningen* of July 21st. The church at Sorreisa, which for the whole winter has been used as a munitions store, is now threatened with demolition. The population has sent an appeal to the Chief Curator of Antiquities in Norway, asking him to try to prevent the destruction of this church. There is, however, little hope of being able to save it, because the Germans pay little attention to such protests.

The church at Narvik has just been reopened after being used for the whole winter as a depot for wines and spirits, but the vaults of the church are still used by the Germans as a store for all kinds of material.

N.S. Bishop in Bergen

Several Swedish newspapers have recently commented on the situation in Bergen, where the diocese now receives its third Quisling Bishop since the German occupation of Norway. These changes have taken place at the request of the holders of the see, and have apparently been due to the implacable opposition of the faithful clergy, and to a complete boycott of the Quislings.

An interesting and typical example of what often occurs was given in *Svenska Morgonbladet*, which states that twenty-eight children were recently baptised in a private house in Lillehammer by a visiting clergyman, who was allowed to preach in Garmo Church, but forbidden to baptise there. Norwegians

will not allow their children to be baptised by Quisling clergymen, but prefer to wait until it can be done by a patriotic clergyman. It is often a long time before baptisms can take place, as the freedom of movement of Norwegian clergymen is very restricted. In certain places, including Lillehammer, Quisling clergymen have forbidden the Opposition clergy to attend funerals and forced the family of the deceased person to accept the offices of an N.S. pastor against its wishes.

Similarly, *Aftenposten*, a Norwegian paper which expresses the Quisling views, recently demanded in an editorial that Opposition clergymen should be banished from the churches. The paper is especially annoyed that these pastors should be allowed to give a blessing after civil marriage. It stresses that church marriages have practically ceased and remarks that the public thinks the benediction of a clergyman in church transforms civil marriage into a church ceremony.

The Quisling authorities now systematically shadow Norwegian clergymen to find out who has taken over the leadership of the temporary Church Board since the arrest of Professor Hallesby and Ludvig Hope. Searches in the homes of a number of Oslo clergymen have proved fruitless.

Bravery in the Face of Death

Svenska Morgonbladet (July 29th, 1943) published this account:

A witness of the execution of eleven Norwegians on May 19th this year states that this execution took place at dawn in the fortress of Kristiansten.

First, all the other prisoners were removed from the fortress. Those condemned to death held each other's hands; they had a proud and resolute attitude in spite of their harsh treatment.

One of those condemned, Henry Tingstad, aged 30, past president of the Sports Union of Workers in the district of Soer-Troenderlag, spoke some words to the German soldiers. The teacher Peder Morseth, who was also sacristan of Selby, started the hymn "A safe stronghold our God is still." All the others sang the hymn in front of the execution squad. Several of the German soldiers began to weep, while others had previously been drinking alcohol to give themselves courage.

Quisling Bishop Interferes

After the recent air raid by Allied planes on Norway, *Svenska Morgonbladet* of August

2nd reported that the notorious Quisling Bishop Lothe of Trondheim forced himself on a funeral party and conducted the service for six victims of the American air raid. He arrived with Norwegian and German authorities and used the funeral speech to brand the Americans as murderers.

DENMARK: PASTORS OPPOSE GERMANS

The Danish *Nationaltidende* (July 31st) reports that two pastors in South Jutland were reprimanded by the Department of Ecclesiastical Affairs, for statements which they made against the Germans and the men of the Frikorps. (Volunteers against U.S. S.R.—Ed.)

One of them was asked if he would conduct a service in commemoration of a fallen volunteer, but he answered that he did not know the fellow and could not say "whether he had been shot in front, or from behind, or whether he shot himself." He declared in court that he did not intend to insult the deceased.

The other had written an article in *Kirkebladet* which the Germans regarded as aimed against the German youth. He stated in court that he did not mean the German youth in particular, but youth in general. Both clergymen have been repeatedly attacked by *Nordschleswigsche Zeitung*, which is working for their dismissal.

A SWISS VIEW OF CONTINENTAL CHURCH LIFE

Semeur Vaudois (July 17th) writes:

"What is going on in Norway, Holland and elsewhere? In the midst of ruins the faithful are drawing near to one another again. They have understood that they are united by stronger bonds than tradition and that they are members of the Body of Christ. They have confessed their faith before God and before men. In this witness they have rediscovered the communion of the Church. The Church, militant and confessing, has been rebuilt.

"This rebuilding has always started in the parishes.

"A parish is not just an association, for an association only exists by the will of its members. A parish is a community created by the Lord. An association has rules which can be changed. A parish has a discipline: it is subjected to the direction of the Spirit. It is a Church; it is the Church of Jesus Christ.

"Only the Word of God gives it this consciousness that it is the Church and not just a human association.

"Many signs indicate to-day that there is a return to the Bible. In many parishes of our country there has been a return to serious Biblical work. The news which we receive from the 'Churches of the captivity' underlines the pre-eminent place which the Bible occupies in the parishes of prisoners. And there again the 'Churches under the Cross' set an example.

"The point is that all are now taking an active part in the life of the parish and that each is accepting his responsibility. In many countries to-day there are parishes deprived of their pastors which are holding fast magnificently. In the prisoners' camps there are parishes without chaplains which have an intense spiritual life."

SCOTS KIRK IN THE DESERT

The little stone kirk in the desert at Geneifa, planned by the Rev. T. L. Low, chaplain to Scottish Forces, as a memorial to Scotsmen who have fallen in the Middle East, was dedicated in July. St. Andrew's Kirk, which was built in four months by Scottish soldier workmen, is in traditional Scottish style, the architect being Captain J. Wingate, of the Highland Light Infantry, who comes from Troon. Stained glass memorial windows are the work of Lieut. I. G. M. Eadie, of the Gordon Highlanders, a Dundee man, and the regimental crests of the Scottish regiments who fought in the desert have been carved in stone by soldier craftsmen. The Communion table, pulpit, and lectern are memorials to the Rev. Peter Hamilton, Rev. Vernon Clarke, and Rev. W. G. Mills, three Church of Scotland chaplains who fell in the Middle East.

The ceremony of dedication was carried out in accordance with the practice of the Church of Scotland. The clergy taking part approached the main door. Knocking at the door, the Assistant Chaplain-General said, "Open to me the gates of Righteousness. I will go in unto them and I will praise the Lord." The door was then opened from within by an officer in the Gordon Highlanders. The clergy then entered and proceeded to the Communion table on which the key of the door was laid while the congregation sang, "O God of Bethel."

The Rev. T. L. Low then asked the Assistant Chaplain-General to dedicate St. Andrew's Church, the Scottish memorial built by Scottish skill and labour as a worthy house of God and as a memorial to the Scot-

tish dead and the courage and endurance of all Scotsmen who served in the Middle East.

THE SCOTS KIRK, LISBON

A number of the congregation of the Scots Kirk, Lisbon, recently helped to attend to the needs of a large party of wounded British servicemen on their way home for repatriation from Italian prisoner-of-war camps. They changed ships at Lisbon.

Tables, chairs, and urns were sent from the church, and the members helped to serve the men with a meal, which was much appreciated, as were also the English papers available. When the minister, the Rev. Stuart Robertson, got down to the docks after his morning service he was received most cordially by the men. He took his reception to be a tribute to the padres of the 8th Army, to which most of these wounded men belong.

The British prisoners of war were very popular with the Portuguese, and very appreciative of all that was done for them, more so than the Italians who arrived soon after.

SEX MORALITY: GROUNDS FOR CONCERN AND HOPE

The Bishop of Derby writes in the Derby Diocesan Leaflet:—

"The Archbishop of Canterbury, in the course of a speech made last month, referred to 'the really alarming collapse of honesty and sex morality.' The facts are disturbing, and cannot reasonably be denied. War conditions are in some measure responsible. . . . The facts constitute a resounding challenge to the Christian Church and to every one of its professed members. It is important that Christians should know where they stand, and that they should reflect deeply, alike upon the implications of their creed, and upon the foundations of Christian morality. It is enjoined in the Prayer Book that children should be instructed in the Ten Commandments; and indeed this Old Testament code, with its majestic series of authoritative prohibitions, has by no means lost its value as an initial basis of moral teaching. But a time comes when sophisticated modern youth, in reply to the authoritative 'Thou shalt not,' is disposed to ask the question, 'Why shouldn't I?' It behooves all who are engaged in the instruction of youth to think out a constructive answer.

"Meanwhile it remains true that the fundamental need is belief in God, in such a sense as should involve not merely a realisation of God's Holiness, but also the awareness of man's responsibility to God as his

Judge. The themes of 'righteousness, temperance, and judgment to come' are still needed: and so also is the ancient preaching of sin and of redemption through Christ, with due emphasis upon the availability of Divine grace for the subdual of passion, and for the overcoming of besetting temptation."

On the other hand, the Bishop of Manchester writes in his Diocesan Leaflet for August:

"I am somewhat perturbed by the prevailing fashion to deplore the moral deterioration of our national character and especially of that of our younger people. I know that it is easy to give examples of failure, but I can quite as easily provide examples of quite another kind. It is true that temptation to evil, to laxity, and to carelessness is greater than ever owing to the fact that we are at war. War makes life more difficult, and as life becomes more difficult failure becomes easier. The ships at sea may be as staunch as ever, but there are more shipwrecked during a storm. It is not the failure of the ships, it is the stress of the storm. So with our people and especially with the younger among them. Therefore they need all the encouragement and help that we can give them. Moreover, if armchair critics and anonymous letter-writers in the Press are always bemoaning the failures it does tend to make some thoughtless young people—and all are not thoughtful—take the view that if everyone is failing, it is useless for them to fight for the victory of character. No more poisonous doctrine can be taught than to suggest that victory is impossible or indeed that it never comes. That would be defeatism in the realm of the war. It is equally defeatism in the realm of character and of service. I see much in these days of our young people, both in uniform and out of it, and in all kinds of circumstances, and I often find myself both proud of them and very thankful. The clergy are working very bravely amongst them, so are a multitude of lay men and women. Sometimes we meet with discouragement, but there is no need for despair. The fathers may have eaten a sour grape, perhaps they have, but we must see to it that the children's teeth are not set on edge. Christians can despair of no generation, and certainly there is no need to despair of that which is growing up to-day. We can pray and plan and work. We can influence and help. We can set an example. We must not discourage or decry. To-day's problems sound a trumpet-call to greater and more devoted service in His cause and in His power."